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DOMESTIC AIR TRAVEL TO GET COSTLIER AS BASE FARE HIKED

Starting June 1, airfare would be 13-16% costlier, while carriers can operate at 50% of fleet capacity from the existing 80%

DURATION-BASED HIKE, LOWEST FARE AT ₹2,300

Fare for less than 40 minute travel will be hiked from ₹2,300 to ₹2,600. Flights between 40- and 60-minute duration will have fares at a lower limit of ₹3,300. For flights of 60-90 minute duration, fare will be charged at ₹4,000; 90-120 minutes at ₹4,700; 150-180 minutes at ₹6,100; and 180-210 minutes will cost ₹7,400, the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced

SLUMP IN TRAFFIC AMID SECOND WAVE

- The ministry said the revision was made after a surge in Covid cases resulted in a marked decrease in passenger traffic
- The new fare price limit will not include taxes and the airport development fees, which will be added to the passenger fare
- New fares will see a rise of ₹300 to ₹1,000 depending on duration

2nd hike

IN THREE MONTHS. IN FEBRUARY, THE FARE WAS HIKED BY 10-13%

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Lockdown in state may not be extended beyond June 7, says Yediyurappa

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

WITH a slight decline in Covid cases and positivity rate over the last few days in the State, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Saturday expressed confidence that the situation would come under control in the next four to five days.

After his three-hour meeting with elected representatives and officers from districts that are reporting a high number of cases, he said, "The lockdown will continue till June 7 and it will be implemented strictly. The decision on its extension will be taken depending on the situation. If people cooperate with us, probably the question of extending it may not arise."

Revenue Minister R Ashoka and other elected representatives from Bengaluru suggested that the restriction in Bengaluru should be lifted in a phased manner. The lockdown has helped Bengaluru as the number of cases has gone down from a peak of 22,000 to around 5,000 now, Ashoka said. "We suggested to the chief minister that export-oriented industries should be reopened first, and other sectors later. He will take the final decision," he added.

Earlier in the day, Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the chief minister will decide on the lockdown extension after discussing it with ministers. As the Centre has directed that Covid guidelines be followed till June 30, the CM will discuss this too with ministers before taking the decision, he added. During the meeting, the CM instructed MPs, MLAs and officers from Mysuru, Hassan, Belagavi, Kalaburagi and Vijayapura districts to bring down the positivity rate to less than 10 per cent. P3

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KARNATAKA	MAY 28	MAY 29
Fresh cases	22,823	20,628
Recoveries	52,253	42,444
Deaths	401	492

NATIONWIDE	MAY 28	MAY 29
Fresh cases	1,86,364	1,73,790
Recoveries	2,59,459	2,84,601
Deaths	3,660	3,617

EXPRESS READ

Bar Council extends ₹1.06 cr Covid aid to lawyers

Bengaluru: The Karnataka State Bar Council (KSBC) has extended financial aid of ₹1.06 crore to 733 lawyers infected with Covid-19. The KSBC has sanctioned ₹10,000 each for lawyers in home quarantine, and ₹25,000 each for advocates admitted in hospitals | P4

Mandya cops seize pregnant doc's daily commute

Mangya: A pregnant doctor working at Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences had to go through an ordeal after the autorickshaw she uses regularly to commute to hospital was allegedly confiscated by the police, amidst the total lockdown in the district | P4

BJP MLA taking money per vax from pvt hospital: Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

AFTER allegations that BJP MLA Ravi Subramanya is taking ₹700 per Covid vaccine from a private hospital, and that his MP-nephew Tejasvi Surya is promoting the private hospital through advertisements surfaced on Saturday, KPCC president DK Shivakumar and Congress Legislature Party leader Siddaramaiah demanded that an FIR be filed and a high court-monitored probe be ordered against the two BJP leaders.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera in New Delhi too alleged that an audio tape has surfaced on social media sites, where a private hospital representative is heard saying that they have to pay Rs 700 per vaccine to Ravi Subramanya.

Khera demanded that the two BJP leaders should be removed as MLA and MP.

Both Tejasvi Surya and Ravi Subramanya denied the charges. On Saturday, Shivakumar said, "The allegations against Ravi Subramanya of taking commission for vaccines are serious. MP Tejasvi Surya has been promoting paid vaccination at private hospitals." P3

An aircraft which will spray organic disinfectant over highly-populated areas of Bengaluru, as part of a three-day pilot project launched by BBMP, takes flight from Jakkur Aerodrome on Saturday. The DGCA, however, has clarified that no permission has been granted for the exercise, since the plane will be flying at a precariously low altitude of about 500 feet | SHRIRAM BK | P2

Real efficacy of Covaxin, Covishield under ICMR lens

4,000 vaccinated people across 10 cities in India being tracked

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

IN a bid to address concerns that Covid vaccines may not be offering full protection from serious infection, the Indian Council of Medical Research has started a crucial project to measure the real-world effectiveness of Covishield and Covaxin, authorities told TNIE. The exercise, which started earlier this week, is to peruse post-vaccination effects to understand if they run contrary to clinical trial results.

Anecdotal reports suggest that a number of people who have taken two doses of both Covishield as well as Covaxin have landed in hospitals after contracting the virus and a few have died. However, there is no concrete official data on such people so far. There have also been concerns that these vaccines may be less effective against the B.1.6.17 variant of SARS-CoV-2, the strain that has been driving the second wave of the pandemic in India.

The exercise led by the Chennai-based National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), under the ICMR, is using a case-control protocol of tracking about 4,000 people at 11 sites across 10 cities in India. Tarun Bhatnagar, a scientist with the NIE and also the principal investigator for the study, said while clinical trials give the efficacy data on whether vaccines will work, effectiveness study will gauge whether vaccines are working in real-world settings in preventing serious Covid. "This study is also crucial to determine whether the effect of vaccines is influenced by other factors such as age, prior Covid, number of doses and variants among others," he added.

Besides, the vaccination status of nearly 1,300 severe Covid-19 patients admitted in hospitals will be compared with that of 2,600 persons who are found Covid -ve in tests.

"If the vaccines are effective, the proportion of the unvaccinated should be much higher among the 1,300 than among the 2,600," said an ICMR official. "The study is expected to yield an actual number for effectiveness in percentage terms and the results are expected within the next 2-3 months."

PM-CARES to support Covid-orphaned children

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Centre on Saturday decided that children who have lost both their parents due to Covid-19 will be supported under 'PM-CARES for Children' scheme, which will ensure educational their needs, including higher education.

The decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deliberate on the steps needed to help such Covid-orphaned children. The PM announced a number of benefits to children impacted by the current pandemic.

PM CARES will contribute through a specially designed scheme to create a corpus of ₹10 lakh for each child when he or she reaches 18 years of age. The corpus will then be used to give monthly financial support for the next five years to take care of his or her personal requirements including higher education. Upon reaching the age of 23 years, he or she will get the corpus amount as a lump-sum payment.

The scheme will also take full responsibility for the educational needs of such children, as they will be given admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar. PM-CARES will pay for expenditure on uniform, text books and notebooks of such children.

Children in the 11-18 age group will be given admission in any Central government residential school such as Sainik School, Navodaya Vidyalaya etc.

The scheme will also ensure enrollment of such children under Ayushman Bharat Scheme with a health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh. Premium for these children till the age of 18 years will be paid by PM-CARES. P7

K'TAKA ANNOUNCES FINANCIAL SCHEME TO HELP COVID ORPHANS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka Government on Saturday announced the Bala Seva scheme to provide financial assistance to children who have lost their parents to Covid.

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa said that ₹3,500 per month will be given to guardians/caretakers of such children. Children below 10 years old, who do not have guardians, will be put under registered childcare institutions and admitted to model residential schools.

"For children who have completed 10th standard, a free laptop or a tablet will be provided. For girls who have completed 21 years, ₹1 lakh will be provided for their marriage expenses, higher education or self-employment," Yediyurappa said, and added that mentorship will be provided for the overall development of such children.

CONTINUE ON: P3

Second Covid wave blew all preparations away: Nirmala

IFFATH FATHIMA @ Bengaluru

THE intensity and scale of Covid second wave shook off the preparations in the country, said Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman, who along with other experts from various fields, discussed the scenario after the second wave in the country on Saturday.

A virtual edition of IIMBueX, a leadership conclave organised by the alumni of IIM-Bangalore, had Dr Devi Shetty, cardiac surgeon and chairperson of IIM-B Board of Governors, Dr Gagandeep Kang, clinical scientist, Hrish Mittal, president of IIMBAA, Prof Chinmay Tumbe, author of Age of Pandemics and faculty, IIM-Ahmedabad and others. Sitharaman said, "The second wave hit us so hard that there was no preparation. The amount of medicines and other infrastructure was not adequate and this resulted in a severe period of stress. However, the peak is coming down. We hope to maintain the downward trend."

Dr Shetty pointed out, "We need to ramp up the healthcare system, by not building more hospitals, but by focusing on setting up nursing colleges, doubling medical seats and starting a micro-health insurance which can be accessed through phone... there should be a panel of experts to address the third wave."

'We'll see 6b jabs this yr'

Dr Gagandeep Kang, a top clinical scientist, said, "The vaccine rollout was slow because supply chains are set up to handle only so much. An estimation done last year anticipated that around 2.5 billion doses could be made in 2021. But with a lot of effort by multilateral agencies and governments, we think we will have 6 billion or more doses this year."

INTERVIEW

'PREPARE NOW TO PROTECT KIDS IN THIRD WAVE'

Children are especially expected to be at risk during the third wave, and one needs to understand what symptoms to watch out for. This particular population needs attention and it should start now, says Dr Asha Benakappa, HoD (Paediatrics) at Chandramma Dayananda Sagar Institute of Medical Education and Research. P4

BEFITTING TRIBUTE

Pulwama martyr's wife quits cushy job, joins Army

VINEET UPADHYAY @ Dehradun

"I love you Vibhu!" said Lt Nitika Kaul, wife of martyr Major Vibhuti Shankar Dhaundiyal, after a ceremony at the Officers Training Academy, Chennai, on Saturday.

Chief of the Army's Northern Command Lieutenant General Y K Joshi placed stars on Nitika Kaul's shoulders.

Nitika was married to Major Vibhuti Shankar Dhoundiyal for 9 months when he was killed in action fighting terrorists in Pulwama, Kashmir in February 2019.

"He will always be a part of my life. I feel he is around looking at me, wishing me luck for having made it to the Army," Nitika said. An engineer by training, Nitikia holds a master's degree in business administration. She has worked with a corporate house as a business analyst for three years but left the job to join the Army. She cleared written and interview of the Services Selection Board in February 2020 and received her letter in March 2020.

"The day I stepped inside the academy, I imagined he too must have traversed the same path," said Kaul.

Vaishnavi, Nitika's sister-in-law said, "We are happy but we miss Vibhuti. Nitika has been more than brave. She picked herself quickly and decided to follow in Vibhuti's footsteps."

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